

The upper end portion of the body includes an integral first feature that forms a first half of an anchoring clamp. The lower end portion of the body includes an integral second feature that forms a stake. The stake is positioned at the end of the lower end portion of the body and is configured to secure the body to the ground when the stake is
5 inserted in the ground.

The anchoring device is further comprised of a third feature that forms a second half of the anchoring clamp. The third feature is not integral with the body but engages the body at a position opposite the first half of the anchoring clamp. The first and second halves of the anchoring clamp (provided by the first and third features of the body)
10 cooperate to secure a cover to the body. The first and third features forming the anchoring clamp and the second feature forming the stake are configured of natural parts or appendages of the living creature.

In one embodiment, the natural part or appendage of the living creature that forms the anchoring clamp may be comprised of the creature's mouth, in which the first and
15 third features, respectively, comprise an upper and lower portion of the mouth. In another embodiment, the natural part or appendage of the living creature forming the anchoring clamp may be comprised of arms or legs of the creature that occur in the upper end portion of the body. For example, the first and third features may be comprised of arms or legs of the creature.

A biasing mechanism in the anchoring device may be used to exert a force that biases the first and third features together to provide a clamping force for the anchoring clamp. For example, where the first and third features are comprised of arms or legs of the creature, the biasing mechanism may exert a force which biases one arm or leg toward the other arm or leg. Alternatively, an arm or leg of the creature may be biased toward a
25 portion of the creature's body.

The natural part or appendage of the living creature forming the stake may be comprised of a tail that occurs in the lower end portion of the creature's body. Alternatively, the stake may be comprised of one or more legs that occur in the lower end portion of the body.

The third feature of the device that forms the second half of the anchoring clamp may engage the body by way of a hinge. In this manner, the second half of the anchoring clamp is hingedly attached to the body opposite the first half of the anchoring clamp. The

pivot point of the hinge is preferably positioned within the upper end portion of the body remote from the second feature that forms the stake.

The first and third features of the device that form the anchoring clamp may further include protrusions that facilitate securing the cover to the body of the anchoring device. Preferably, the protrusions are configured to mate with one another. In one embodiment of the invention, protrusions on the first and second halves of the anchoring clamp are teeth that occur in the mouth of the creature. In another embodiment, the protrusions are fingers or toes that occur on arms or legs of the creature. A hook-and-loop material may further be disposed on the first and third features of the device to facilitate securing the cover to the body.

In addition, the third feature of the body that forms the second half of the anchoring clamp and/or the second feature that forms the stake may be configured in two or more parts. For example, the stake may be comprised of two or more legs that occur in the lower end portion of the body, with each leg configured as a stake. An anchoring device having a third feature (*i.e.*, half of the anchoring clamp) configured in two or more parts may be in the form of creature in which two or more arms or legs hingedly engage the body of the device at a position opposite the first half of the anchoring clamp. In addition, two or more biasing mechanisms may be used in which each biasing mechanism is associated with an arm or leg to exert a force that biases the arms or legs toward the first half of the anchoring clamp.

Furthermore, the body of the living creature forming the anchoring device may be formed with a cavity that accepts material and adds weight to the body to further facilitate securing the body to the ground. A hook feature may also be added to the stake to facilitate securing the stake to the ground when the stake is inserted in the ground.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing aspects and many of the attendant advantages of this invention will become more readily appreciated as the same become better understood by reference to the following detailed description, when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIGURE 1 is a pictorial diagram of one embodiment of an anchoring device constructed in accordance with the present invention in which the body of the anchoring

device is in the form of a living creature, in this instance, a dolphin, in which the dolphin's mouth forms an anchoring clamp and the dolphin's tail forms a stake;

FIGURE 2 is a side elevation view of the anchoring device shown in FIGURE 1, in which the lower jaw of the dolphin's mouth forming a lower half of the anchoring clamp is shown removed;

FIGURE 3 is a front elevation view of the anchoring device shown in FIGURE 2;

FIGURE 4 is a rear elevation view of the anchoring device shown in FIGURE 2;

FIGURE 5 is a top plan view of the anchoring device shown in FIGURE 2;

FIGURE 6 is a bottom plan view of the anchoring device shown in FIGURE 2;

FIGURE 7 is a side elevation view of the lower jaw portion of the dolphin's mouth that forms the lower half of the anchoring clamp;

FIGURE 8 is a front elevation view of the lower jaw portion shown in FIGURE 7;

FIGURE 9 is a rear elevation view of the lower jaw portion shown in FIGURE 7;

FIGURE 10 is a depiction of a pin that may be used to secure the lower jaw portion of the dolphin's mouth shown in FIGURE 7 to the anchoring device shown in FIGURE 2;

FIGURES 11A and 11B are front and side elevation views, respectively, of a spring mechanism that may be used in the anchoring device of FIGURE 1 to provide a force that biases the anchoring clamp together;

FIGURE 12 is a pictorial diagram of another embodiment of an anchoring device constructed in accordance with the present invention in which the body of the anchoring device is in the form of a living creature, in this instance, a shark, with a body and lower jaw portion that provide an anchoring clamp similar to the body and lower jaw portions of the dolphin embodiment shown in FIGURES 2 and 7;

FIGURE 13 is a front view of the anchoring device shown in FIGURE 12; and

FIGURE 14 is a pictorial diagram of yet another embodiment of an anchoring device constructed in accordance with the present invention in which the body of the anchoring device is in the form of a living creature, in this instance, a mermaid, in which the mermaid's arms form an anchoring clamp and the mermaid's tail forms a stake.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The present invention is directed to an anchoring device for securing blankets, towels, tarpaulins, and other types of covers to the ground. Exemplary embodiments of

the invention described herein are particularly suited for anchoring a beach blanket to a sandy beach. However, these and other embodiments of the invention may also be used for securing covers to soil, *e.g.*, when picnicking or sun tanning in the park.

Anchoring devices formed in accordance with the present invention have a body
5 in the form of a living creature and a stake and anchoring clamp that are configured in the form of natural parts or appendages of the living creature. FIGURE 1 illustrates one embodiment of the invention in which an anchoring device 10 has a body 12 in the form of a dolphin. The body 12 has an upper end portion 14 forming the head of the dolphin and a lower end portion 16 forming the rear of the dolphin. The upper end portion 14 and
10 lower end portion 16 of the dolphin's body 12 are located remote from each other at opposite ends of the body 12.

The upper end portion 14 of the dolphin's body 12 includes an integral first feature 18 that forms a first half of an anchoring clamp. In the embodiment shown in FIGURE 1, the first feature 18 is the upper half of the dolphin's mouth, and as shown, is
15 formed integrally with the dolphin's body 12.

The lower end portion 16 of the body 12 includes an integral second feature 20 forming a stake. In the embodiment shown in FIGURE 1, the second feature 20 is the tail of the dolphin, and as shown, is formed integrally with the dolphin's body 12. The stake 20 is preferably positioned at the end of the lower end portion 16 and formed at an
20 angle with respect to the body 12 so that the stake 20 is directed for insertion in the ground while the body 12 preferably rests on top of the ground. The stake 20 is configured to secure the dolphin's body 12 to the ground when the stake is inserted into the ground.

The anchoring device 10 further comprises a third feature 22 that forms a second
25 half of the anchoring clamp of the device. In the embodiment illustrated in FIGURE 1, the third feature 22 is a lower jaw portion of the dolphin's mouth. The third portion 22 is not integral with the dolphin's body 12 but engages the body 12 at a position opposite the first feature 18 that forms the first half of the anchoring clamp. In this manner, the first feature 18 and the third feature 22 form first and second halves of the anchoring clamp,
30 which in this embodiment is the dolphin's mouth, and cooperate with each other to secure a cover to the dolphin's body 12.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the third feature 22 (*e.g.*, the lower jaw portion of the dolphin's mouth) is hingedly attached to the body 12 opposite the first feature 18. The pivot point of the hinge 24 is preferably positioned within the upper end portion 14 of the body 12 remote from the second feature 20 that forms the stake.

5 As illustrated in FIGURE 1, the lower jaw portion 22 of the dolphin rotates about the pivot point of the hinge 24 in a direction indicated by arrow 26. The lower jaw portion rotates from a normally closed position 28 to an open position 29, and vice versa. As further described below in reference to FIGURES 11A and 11B, the anchoring device 10 includes a biasing mechanism that exerts a force which biases the lower jaw
10 portion 22 back toward the closed position 28 to provide the clamping force of the anchoring clamp.

Optionally, the stake 20 may include one or more serrations, protrusions, or equivalent hook features 30 that facilitate securing the dolphin's body 12 to the ground when the stake 20 is inserted in the ground. The anchoring device 10 may include
15 additional features, such as fins 32 for the dolphin configuration, that may be designed to facilitate handling of the anchoring device 10.

FIGURES 2-6 illustrate various views of the integral body, clamp, and stake portions of the anchoring device 10 shown in FIGURE 1. The non-integral third feature 22 of the anchoring device 10 is depicted separately in FIGURES 7-9. In brief,
20 FIGURE 2 illustrates a side view of the dolphin's body 12. The body 12 has an integral upper mouth portion 18 forming the first half of the anchoring clamp and an integral tail 20 formed at an angle with respect to the body 12 to provide a stake.

FIGURE 3 is a front view of the anchoring device 10 shown in FIGURE 2. As illustrated, the anchoring device 10 includes an upper end portion 14 that includes the
25 integral first feature 18, namely the upper portion of the dolphin's mouth. Also shown is the second feature 20 forming the stake. FIGURE 4 is a rear view of the anchoring device 10 and depicts, in particular, the lower end portion 16 that includes the stake 20.

FIGURE 5 is a top plan view of the anchoring device 10 depicting, in particular, the body 12 and the upper and lower end portions 14, 16 of the body that are located
30 remote from each other at opposite ends of the body. FIGURE 6 is a bottom plan view of the anchoring device 10 depicting, in particular, the integral first feature 18 and integral second feature 20.

FIGURE 7 is a side view of the non-integral third feature 22 (*i.e.*, the lower jaw portion of the dolphin's mouth) that forms the second half of the anchoring clamp. FIGURES 8 and 9 depict front and rear views, respectively, of the lower jaw portion 22 shown in FIGURE 7.

5 Persons having ordinary skill in the art will recognize numerous ways in which the lower jaw portion 22 may be connected to the body 12. The particular embodiment of the invention shown in FIGURE 1 uses a pin 34 as depicted in FIGURE 10 to hingedly secure the lower jaw portion 22 to the body 12. The pin 34 extends laterally across the width of the body 12 at the pivot point of the hinge 24. The pin 34 may include end
10 caps 35 as shown in FIGURE 10 to secure the pin 34 to the body 12 when the pin 34 is installed. Of course, other mechanisms exist for hingedly securing the lower jaw portion 22 to the body 12 that are not specifically illustrated, but are readily recognized and appreciated by those having ordinary skill in the art of hinge design. For example, the anchoring device 10 may use two separate securing mechanisms on the two sides of
15 the dolphin's mouth, rather than the pin 34 that extends across the lateral width of the dolphin.

 The anchoring clamp (*i.e.*, the dolphin's mouth in the embodiment shown in FIGURE 1) is provided a clamping force by a biasing mechanism included in the anchoring device 10. In one embodiment, the anchoring device 10 uses a spring-type
20 biasing mechanism 36 as illustrated in FIGURES 11A and 11B.

 The spring mechanism 36 may be constructed of a wire of suitable strength that is wound with one or more windings to provide a central body portion having two end portions 37 that project outward from the central body portion. The end portions 37, when pressed toward or away from each other, cause the spring mechanism 36 to exert a
25 corresponding opposite force toward the natural position of the spring mechanism 36. When installed in the anchoring device 10 of FIGURE 1, one of the end portions 37 may be connected to the first half of the anchoring clamp, namely the first feature 18, and the other end portion 37 may be connected to the second half of the anchoring clamp, namely the third feature 22. Accordingly, for the dolphin configuration of FIGURE 1, when the
30 mouth of the dolphin is moved from a normally closed position 28 to an open position 29, the spring mechanism 36 exerts a force that biases the lower jaw portion 22 toward the closed position 28. The biasing mechanism may be configured differently in other

embodiments of the invention. For example, in the mermaid configuration of FIGURE 14, discussed below, one of the end portions 37 of the spring mechanism 36 may be connected to an integral arm or body portion of the mermaid, and the other end portion 37 may be connected to the non-integral arm portion (third feature 22b) of the mermaid.

In any event, when the spring mechanism 36 is installed, the pin 34 shown in FIGURE 10 may extend through the windings of the spring mechanism 36. Preferably, the biasing force exerted by the spring mechanism 36 is strong enough to adequately secure a cover to the body 12 within the anchoring clamp, but also permit users of the anchoring device 10 to open the anchoring clamp as needed.

FIGURE 12 depicts another embodiment of the anchoring device 10. The anchoring device 10a shown in FIGURE 12 includes several features that are similar to the anchoring device 10 shown in FIGURE 1. The anchoring device 10a includes a body 12a in the form of a living creature, in this instance a shark. The body 12a of the shark has an upper end portion 14a and a lower end portion 16a that are located remote from each other at opposite ends of the shark's body 12a. Integral with the body 12a at the upper end portion 14a is a first feature 18a that forms the first half of an anchoring clamp. As with the dolphin configuration shown in FIGURE 1, the shark configuration shown in FIGURE 12 uses the upper portion of the shark's mouth as the first feature 18a. The anchoring device 10a further includes a second feature 20a integral with the body 12a to form a stake. In the shark configuration, the integral second feature 20a is the tail of the shark, which is positioned at an angle with respect to the shark's body 12a. The stake 20a may include one or more serrations, protrusions, or equivalent hook features 30a that facilitate securing the shark to the ground when the stake 20a is inserted in the ground.

Separate from the body 12a is a third feature 22a that forms a second half of the anchoring clamp. As with the dolphin configuration of FIGURE 1, the third feature 22a in the shark configuration of FIGURE 12 is comprised of the lower jaw portion of the shark's mouth. The lower jaw portion 22a may be hingedly connected to the shark's body 12a at a hinge 24a. The hinge 24a may use a pin, such as the pin 34, and a biasing mechanism, such as the spring mechanism 36, shown in FIGURES 10, 11A and 11B, to secure the lower jaw portion 22a to the shark's body 12a and bias the shark's mouth

toward a closed position. FIGURE 13 provides a front view of the anchoring device 10a in which the lower jaw portion 22a is secured to the body 12a at a position opposite the upper mouth portion 18a of the shark.

To facilitate securing a cover within the anchoring clamp of the anchoring device,
5 embodiments of the present invention may further include protrusions in the first and
second halves of the anchoring clamp. The protrusions in the first half of the anchoring
clamp preferably mate with protrusions in the second half of the anchoring clamp. For
the shark configuration of the anchoring clamp 10a shown in FIGURE 12, the teeth of the
shark provide such protrusions. The teeth facilitate securing a cover to the anchoring
10 device 10a when the mouth of the shark is closed. Other embodiments of the invention
may include a hook-and-loop material (such as that sold under the trademark
VELCRO®) on the first and third features of the anchoring device that form the
anchoring clamp. When a cover is inserted into the anchoring clamp, the hook-and-loop
material preferably engages the cover and further secures the cover within the anchoring
15 clamp.

While living creatures, such as a dolphin and a shark have been shown and
described above, other forms of living creatures can be used in the invention. The living
creatures may be animals or plants. The living creatures may also take on a human form,
as illustrated by the mermaid configuration shown in FIGURE 14. The anchoring
20 device 10b illustrated in FIGURE 14 includes a body 12b in the form of a mermaid having
an upper end portion 14b and a lower end portion 16b that are integral with the mermaid's
body 12b. The upper end portion 14b and lower end portion 16b are located remote from
each other at opposite ends of the body 12b. In the upper end portion 14b, the anchoring
device 10b includes a first feature 18b forming a first half of an anchoring clamp. In this
25 instance, the first feature 18b is an arm of the mermaid.

The lower end portion 16b includes an integral second feature 20b, namely the tail
of the mermaid, which forms a stake. The stake 20b is preferably positioned at the end of
the lower end portion 16b of the anchoring device 10b. When inserted into the ground,
the stake 20b secures the mermaid's body 12b to the ground. Optionally, the stake 20b
30 may include one or more serrations, protrusions, or equivalent hook features 30b that
facilitate securing the mermaid's body 12b to the ground when the stake 20b is inserted in
the ground.

The anchoring device 10b further includes a third feature 22b that forms a second half of the anchoring clamp. In the mermaid configuration of FIGURE 14, the third feature 22b is the forearm of the mermaid opposite the arm forming the first feature 18b. The forearm 22b is not integral with the mermaid's body 12b, but engages the body 12b at an elbow opposite the arm 18b. A hinge 24b may be used to connect the forearm 22b to the body 12b. The forearm 22b, as shown, rotates from a closed position 28b to an open position 29b, and vice versa, in the direction of arrow 26b.

The anchoring device 10b further includes a biasing mechanism, such as a spring mechanism 36 shown in FIGURES 11A and 11B, at the pivot point of the hinge 24b to exert a force that biases the forearm 22b toward the closed position 28b.

While the mermaid configuration shown in FIGURE 14 illustrates the hinge 24b at an elbow of the mermaid, it should be understood that the hinge may be located at other portions of the mermaids body. For instance, the hinge 24b may be located at a shoulder of the mermaid such that the entire arm of the mermaid rotates between a closed position 28b and open position 29b. In other embodiments, the hinge 24b may be located at a wrist such that the hand of the mermaid rotates between a closed and open position. Similar considerations apply to animal and plant configurations of the invention in which the hinge that connects the third feature to the body of the anchoring device can be positioned at various locations.

It should further be understood that the first feature 18 of the anchoring device that forms the first half of an anchoring clamp can be comprised of a portion of the creature's body that is not necessarily an appendage such as an arm or a leg. For example, as illustrated in FIGURES 1 and 2 , the first feature 18 may be comprised of an upper portion of the creature's mouth. The first feature may also be simply a portion of the creature's body. In such a configuration, the anchoring device may include a biasing mechanism that exerts a force which biases the third feature of the body toward the body to provide the clamping force of the anchoring clamp.

To further facilitate securing the body of the anchoring device to the ground, the anchoring device may be formed with a cavity that accepts material, such as sand, soil or other items, that add weight to the body. For example, a cavity may be provided in the body of the dolphin configuration shown in FIGURE 1 allowing the dolphin to be filled

with sand which, when the stake 20 of the dolphin is inserted into the ground, the added weight of the dolphin's body assists in keeping the body secured to the ground.

As noted earlier, embodiments of the invention may include protrusions in the anchoring clamp to facilitate securing a cover to the body of the anchoring device. In the
5 mermaid configuration of the anchoring device 10b shown in FIGURE 14, the fingers of the mermaid act as protrusions for this purpose. In other embodiments, protrusions such as claws, toes, twigs, branches may act for this purpose.

While several preferred embodiments of the invention have been illustrated and described, it will be appreciated that various changes can be made therein without
10 departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, particularly as to selection of a living creature for configuring an embodiment of the invention. Virtually any kind of land or sea animal or plant can be contemplated for configuring an embodiment of the invention. Without any limitation whatsoever on the scope of the present invention as claimed, configurations that have been contemplated thus far include animals such as an otter,
15 alligator, turtle, flamingo, seahorse, squirrel and frog. For creatures such as these, the creature's tail, fins, legs, or paws that occur in the lower end portion of the creature may be configured as a stake that is used to secure the creature's body to the ground, while arm, legs, fins, paws, horns or the mouth of the creature may form the anchoring clamp that secures the cover to the body of the creature. Trees and flowers have also been
20 contemplated for embodiments of the invention in which limbs, leaves, or petals of the tree or flower are configured as the anchoring clamp while the trunk or stem of the tree or flower are configured to form the stake. Embodiments of the invention may also be configured as butterflies or other insects in which antennae, wings or legs of the insects function as the anchoring clamp or stake of the anchoring device. As noted earlier,
25 human forms, whether mythical or real, can be used in the invention in which the mouth or arms function as the anchoring clamp and the legs function as the stake.

The embodiments of the invention illustrated and described above depict an anchoring device in which the second feature forming a stake is a single part or appendage of the living creature, such as tail or rear fin. In other embodiments of the
30 invention where the third feature (*i.e.*, stake) of the anchoring device is comprised of legs, for example, the stake may be configured in two or more parts that can be inserted into

the ground. For example, two stakes comprised of separate rear legs of a living creature may be used.

Similarly, the third feature of the anchoring device (that forms the second half of the anchoring clamp) may be configured in two or more parts that each engage the body
5 at a position opposite the first half of the anchoring clamp. For example, the anchoring device may in the form of a living creature in which the third feature is comprised of arms or legs in the upper end portion of the creature. In reference to a mermaid design of the type shown in FIGURE 14, both of the mermaid's arms may comprise the third
10 feature of the mermaid's body, with the first feature (forming the first half of the anchoring clamp) being the mermaid's body or head. Two or more biasing mechanisms may be employed in which each biasing mechanism is associated with one of the parts (*e.g.*, arms) of the third feature to exert a force that biases the part of the third feature toward the first feature (*e.g.*, body) and provide a clamping force for the anchoring clamp. In reference to a mermaid configuration, where each arm of the mermaid comprise the
15 third feature, the arms may have a biasing mechanism that biases the arm toward the body of the mermaid.

Because various changes can be made to embodiments of the invention described herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention, the scope of the invention should be determined from the following claims and equivalents thereto.